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ABSTRACT

Experiences with indigenous people in Mexico and New Mexico illustrate that there are cultural and situational constraints on women's literacy. A participatory demonstration in linguistics in which the demonstrator is largely silent highlights the group dynamics of learning communities that develop in successful literacy and stabilization projects. The leadership shifts, often without the conscious consent of the group, and new leaders emerge as the task changes because one person cannot be the master of all skills. These shifts in leadership can create problems when the organizational bureaucracy appoints a leader who does not recognize the leadership potential of each member in the project. This is especially problematic when the appointed leader is a man and the emergent leader is a woman. Cultural norms often do not allow or encourage such an arrangement. For most tribes working toward stabilizing their languages, involvement of the community, consensus from the community on ways of proceeding, negotiation among community members when a problem arises, and support of the individual learner by the community of learners are crucially important. A community that can resolve these issues will have taken great strides toward becoming a literate community before the first word is ever written or read. In many day-care, preschool, and immersion programs, the majority of the teachers are women. Therefore, involving women in this kind of planning is crucial. An Apache women's literacy camp is described in which women report feeling more relaxed without the presence of men. (TD)

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ED 462 241

The Importance of Women's Literacy in Language Stabilization Projects

Jule Gomez de Garcia, Maureen Olson, Melissa Axelrod

In every indigenous community in which we have worked on language stabilization projects, questions about literacy have been part of the discussion about the best kind of stabilization program for each community. Sometimes the questions are as basic as, "Why literacy?" If a language has never been written before, but has been successfully transmitted for generations, why take the time to create a writing system and to teach people to write when there are so few *speakers* left? Among some groups, the question has been an even more fundamental one involving distrust of the literacy process or a spiritual conviction that their language was not meant by its Creator to be written.

A more specific question asked by many Tribes has been the question of women's literacy, a question that was forcibly brought to the attention of the authors of this paper by a number of situations that converged in the summer of 1999. These situations led us to focus on this question in our work and to seek to share our experiences with others to see if they have had the same concerns and if they have found other (or any) solutions.

The first situation we will describe did not occur chronologically first, but it focused the issues for one of the authors and revealed the essence of the discussion in which we were engaged with various tribal members. Literacy can be an individual's desire, a longing for something that the situations of a person's life have not fulfilled or even given them the option to hope for. One of those hindering situations involves the "mere" fact of gender. Some people who want to learn to read are not able to—not because of some lack of capacity, but simply because they are women. The following is an account of one of the author's experiences in Chiapas, Mexico:

> During the summer of 1999, my daughter and I went to the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, to take part in a human rights program that sends international observers to the mountain communities to serve as "human shields" for the indigenous people of the villages. The village in which I was stationed, Acteal, had suffered a massacre two and a half years before in which forty-five of the community members, mostly women and children, had been attacked in their church by paramilitaries, chased into the surrounding mountains, and brutally murdered.
>
> During the first part of my two-week stay in Acteal, my male campamentista partner and I heard the horrible story of the massacre from the men of the Board of Directors of the Village. The men would not talk directly to me while my partner was present because that would not have been culturally appropriate. But after he left and I was the lone campamentista in the community, I would go sit in the new church and the men of the village would come to tell me their stories of where they were when the massacre started, how they hid their children, stuffed

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leaves in the babies' mouths so they wouldn't cry, how they later buried their wives and daughters, sons, brothers, and neighbours.

The men spoke Spanish and Tzotzil; the women, for the most part, spoke only Tzotzil. I didn't know *any* Tzotzil except for the few words and phrases my partner taught me before he left. But before we went into our villages, my daughter and I bought Spanish-Tzotzil bilingual books of folk tales thinking we could spend the time reading them and perhaps learn a few words of Tzotzil in that way. One day, I took one of the books into the new church, along with my notebook, to continue my pathetic attempts at morphological analysis of parts of a story. One of the men came to see what I was doing, and we worked for hours over the text. At one point, his wife, Rosa, joined us and listened to the two of us reading Tzotzil to each other. Finally, she grabbed the book as we passed it between us, looked at the page we were reading, then closed the book and hugged it to her chest, smiling while hugging and rocking the book. Her eyes were closed and she hummed quietly as she rocked. Then she thrust the book back at me and ran back to the community kitchen.

That night, I took the book to dinner and the men gathered around the 25 watt bulb and read while the women made stack after stack of corn tortillas, listening in and commenting on the stories.

After that day, the word spread among the women that I could read Tzotzil. Assuming that meant I could also speak and understand the language, they came to the new church and told me their stories, weeping, but obviously happy to have someone to tell. I didn't understand what they were saying—or, I didn't understand the words; the meanings were far too clear and too horrible to be trapped in the words. Because she was sure I understood what she was saying, even though the evidence to the contrary was abundant, Rosa also taught me how to wash my clothes on a rock, how to participate in Sunday prayer, what weeds to eat when I craved vegetables. I'm sure she must have thought that my stumbling along through the tasks as I misunderstood what was wanted of me was my general ineptitude at living her life rather than a deficiency in my language. I could, after all, read Tzotzil. Altogether, I learned a few more words of Tzotzil from these lessons and more during the nightly reading sessions that continued to take place in the kitchen as the men huddled around my book.

One of the rules of the human rights group is that participants are not to leave any material goods for the people when they leave. The night before I left, I took the book to dinner again. When I left for the evening, I "forgot" the book, and I could hear them reading and talking and laughing for hours into the night. I left the next morning without my book. But by then, I didn't think of it at all as a material possession. (Gomez de Garcia)

2A

Rosa's actions helped to reinforce a phenomenon we had all witnessed earlier in the summer—the desire of indigenous people to experience the written form of their language and to produce a written form of the literature that contains the stories of their lives. Another significant encounter with this desire occurred during the children's Jicarilla language immersion camps that took place in Dulce, New Mexico, earlier in the summer of 1999. At those camps, a discussion emerged among the women counsellors about the role of writing. The discussion developed as a result of three observations made by the camp staff members.

First, the children had been given small journals and pencils in order to write about their experiences in camp. To our surprise, they took the notebooks with them on fieldtrips and asked the counsellors for the Jicarilla names of things they were seeing and then asked how to write them. After being told the spellings of a few of the words, they tried to figure out the spellings for themselves and to write the words down as they heard them. They were trying to create their own orthographic systems for the language as they were learning the words! From this, we recognized that writing is a tool that the children are accustomed to using in school to aid the learning process, and we felt it was appropriate to make this tool available to them and to encourage their use of it. It is important to emphasize here that we all viewed writing as a way to learn, rather than as something extra that is learned as a separate task.

Second, the women counsellors were very uncomfortable when writing Jicarilla themselves, and they worried that they were spelling the words incorrectly for the children at the camp. We had witnessed the women's concern with their own lack of proficiency before. During the teacher-training and curriculum-design workshops that we conducted for participants in the Administration for Native Americans (ANA)-sponsored Jicarilla Apache Language Immersion Project over the past year and a half, workshops that most of the camp counsellors had attended, it became clear that there was a great deal of uneasiness among the women about their writing. Although many of the workshop participants often had very creative ideas for curriculum materials (including children's story books, cultural and historical texts, and informational materials to be shared with the wider community), many members of the group hesitated to share their written work with others because of a fear that it might not be "correct." Even very fluent speakers were afraid of having their work criticized or of promoting the use of "bad" Jicarilla.

Third, as in Acteal, Chiapas, there are cultural and situational constraints on women's writing. In Acteal, men do not speak to women in public. In fact, the women come out of their houses only to do laundry and to attend prayer services. At the prayer services, the men sit on one side of the church and the women on the other. The men speak Spanish and Tzotzil, and several of them have learned to read in both languages. But the women speak only Tzotzil, and only the ones who have been trained as catechists for the women can read and write and speak a little Spanish in addition to reading and writing Tzotzil. The women have, in practice, no need to speak Spanish and no need to read and write. They have no need to read and write Tzotzil because the only contact most of them have with written Tzotzil is with the New Testament, which is read to them at prayer services.

In contrast, on the Jicarilla reservation, everyone speaks English, and there is a high English literacy rate. Many adults and teenagers and a few children speak Jicarilla Apache. Writing in Jicarilla Apache, however, is associated with academic linguistics, which is associated with titles conferred upon linguists following a course of study that gives them special abilities. Such titles are an Apache recognition of the particular abilities a person has received from some authority deemed worthy of conferring the title. There are no women in Dulce who have linguistics degrees, so these "untitled" women cannot claim the right to be correct in the way they write. There is, however, one man who has a Master's degree in linguistics from a university and who is, therefore, the titled, recognized authority.

A factor that contributes significantly to the difficulties in writing Jicarilla is the lack of a standard written form of the Jicarilla Apache language accepted by the Jicarilla themselves. The teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents who participated in the workshops felt the need to submit their work for corrections to the man whose linguistic training makes him the primary authority on writing in the community. These works were often rejected as a whole because they did not conform to a standard held by that person. The fact that this authority was male and the majority of the workshop participants female contributed to an imbalance in power and control that made the women uncomfortable when they were writing and therefore reluctant to share their work. They knew that others who had learned to write from other sources would judge their writing as "incorrect" because it did not correspond to the often capricious notions of correctness. But the women recognize the need for standardization of the orthography, and because they are committed to the success of the Immersion Project they recognize that they could play an important role in the standardization process. They have begun making plans for a literacy program that could give them the participation they need and want. Those plans will be discussed below.

As a result of our own experiences, we began to wonder how women in other communities experience literacy. How are they using writing? How are they acquiring it? And most importantly, how are supportive communities formed, that is, communities that recognize the strengths of individual learners and leaders and know how to put those strengths together to enhance stabilization projects that include writing?

The Toronto Conference Session on Literacy

Because the discussion of literacy issues, and particularly of women's literacy, can involve some intense feelings about cultural issues, personal beliefs, and political ideologies, we decided that we would introduce the discussion of literacy and literate communities to the participants in our Toronto Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference session through a participatory demonstration that we hoped would invite discussion on a level that would not violate any of the sensitivities mentioned above. The demonstration is one we have used with several other groups in order to invite such discussions. The Toronto session

yielded some very interesting comments and conclusions about literacy made by the participants during their reactions to the demonstration.

A language-learning demonstration. Writing is a system that symbolizes spoken language using marks on paper. To generate some thinking about the acquisition of symbolic systems, we presented a simple demonstration with blocks. The demonstration was loosely based on Gattegno's *Silent Way* (1972), but in this adaptation, developed by the first author, Dr. Gomez de Garcia, the presenter uses blocks of different shapes and colours to prompt the learner-participants to produce certain linguistic structures, in this case, the English pronominal system. The blocks are presented as symbols for spoken words. The learners are familiar with the words, but they must associate them with some arbitrary symbols (the coloured blocks). The goals of this lesson are the same as those summarized by Stevick (1976, p. 137) in his review of *The Silent Way*. Those goals are:

1. to subordinate teaching to learning;
2. to recognize the social forces at work on a class as primary to the learning process over imitation or drill;
3. to assure that the learner's mind "equips itself by its own working, trial and error, deliberate experimentation, by suspending judgement and revising conclusions" (Gattegno, 1972, p. 4);
4. to allow the mind to draw on everything it has already acquired, particularly including its experience of learning its native language; and
5. to keep the teacher from interfering with and sidetracking the learning process!

The goals of this demonstration as a lesson for learning *about* language learning are much the same, but it is learning about learning and the role of the individual and the community in the language-learning process that are the focus of the discussion that follows the block exercise.

The Block Exercise. The presenter, Dr. Gomez de Garcia, begins with four cylindrical blocks (Fisher Price's Baby's First Blocks) and presents each in turn, giving a word to go with them. First, she presents the green block and says "I." Then she indicates by gesture that she wants the learners to repeat the word. Next she shows the yellow block and says "you," requesting repetition by the learners. She then proceeds with a blue block, announcing "he" and signalling for the learners to repeat. And then she labels a red block "she," again signalling for the learners' repetition. She presents the green block again and, without saying anything herself, asks for a response from the learners, who generally respond "I." She alternates presentations of the four different coloured blocks, presenting them one at a time and indicating that a response is required from the learners after each presentation, but still without speaking herself (She has uttered the label for each block only once; the learners have provided all subsequent models of the labels.) The blocks are presented in varying order and with increasing speed until the learners seem comfortable with the pronoun labels for each of the four blocks.

At this time, the presenter introduces a new block, a green cube, which she labels "my car" and asks the learners to repeat. She then presents yellow, red, and blue cubes without saying anything, and the learners label them *themselves* as "your car," "his car," and "her car." Multiple presentations, with increasing speed, eliciting several repetitions of the responses, allow the learners to make the correct associations and to practice verbalizing them quickly.

The process is repeated with plurals for both the pronouns and the car(s), but without any verbalization from the presenter. The learners are presented with, for example, the blue cylinder and the red cylinder together, and the group comes up with "they." Confusion always arises when the yellow cylinder "you" is presented together with the blue or red cylinders "he" or "she," or when the three are presented together. The group is forced to come up with and agree on a form for the second person plural in English. Generally groups agree on "you," but they have on occasion settled for "yous" or "y'all." The plurals for the cars are elicited by presenting, for example, the red cube and the blue cube together, for which the learners produce "their cars." Different combinations of cubes elicit "our cars" and "your cars."

The presenter finally teaches the learners to use the blocks to produce possessives in sentence frames by saying "I'm driving my car" while presenting the appropriate blocks: the green cylinder on top of the green cube. The learners repeat the sentence. Other combinations are presented, and the presenter says nothing while the learners "create" sentences such as "She's driving her car," "He's driving his car," and so forth. Shifting drivers by moving the cylinders onto a cube of a different colour forces the learners to produce "I'm driving his car," "They're driving my car," "You're driving our cars," and so forth. One additional gesture labelled by the presenter allows students to create a number of sentences such as "I'm driving my car, and he's driving his car." Another gesture is added, and they begin to produce variations of "He's not driving his car." With more gesture, they produce many sentences with the same frame as "She's driving his car, but I'm not driving your car."

An observer's comments. As the demonstration was proceeding, the third author took notes on the learners' responses. It is important to note here that all of the authors have participated as learners in this presentation at one time or another. It is a task that requires intense concentration, and many participants in previous sessions have said that it is "exhausting." Only one, a linguist, has ever denounced it entirely. Learners remain focused throughout, and there is an atmosphere of intense participation. We include here the observer's notes on the learners' behaviours:

- Voices become stronger with each repetition, reflecting participants' growing confidence.
- Smiles build over time as speed of presentation of the blocks increases.
- Wider smiles appear, and learners laugh as errors are made.
- There is hesitation at "your car," then everyone has a look of confidence as they figure out what their response is supposed to be.

- Learners begin leaning forward in their chairs.
- When pronoun blocks are presented again after the "car" blocks, there is confusion.
- Learners use discussion intonation when trying to decide whether "I + you" should be "we" or "us," and there is actual negotiation over "you all."
- There is laughter over the plural pronouns, then confusion again with a return to the singular.
- The learners figure out the plural possessives much faster than the plural pronouns, and the laughter seems more relaxed.
- The group is more cohesive, working together as the voices that were initially louder and higher or trying to be first are gone and people seem to be looking for unison in their responses.
- The blocks prompting responses about driving cars are presented very quickly and smoothly, and the learners build in loudness as they build in speed.
- "Oh no!" someone says as the presenter deliberately makes the task harder, but the participants are now smiling, laughing, leaning forward in their chairs with eyes fixed on the presenter.
- One person makes an error, hears the correct response from the others and says "oh!" in recognition.
- Conjunctions are introduced, and the group figures it out very quickly, responding louder than before, giving complete sentences rapidly as the presenter gestures for them to speak their sentences ever faster to approach normal speech rate.
- With new conjunctions and negation, the group is very quick to understand, to create the appropriate sentences, and to respond very loudly.

The language-learning experience. After the demonstration, the learners were asked to reflect on the learning process they had just experienced. The initial responses were: "That was fun!" and "That was hard!" as well as, "That was useful for our language program; I never thought of language like that before!" In order to decontextualize the process, the participants were asked to reflect specifically on how the process they had been led through was similar to language and language learning. Their responses focused on how, like language learning, the process was difficult. Participants located the difficulty in the processes of being introduced to new symbols (sounds or blocks), associating sounds with patterns, finding rules, revising rules, and having to focus and listen with close attention. In addition, participants felt that the block demonstration reminded them of language learning because they had to try to be spontaneous and creative in their productions, and because it was fun, got better with practice, and made them think. They commented that they felt they could only learn a small amount at one time because they had to relate each new piece of language to a whole complex system before they could move on.

All participants commented freely on what they had just experienced as language learners. They talked about the "pieces" of language they had experienced, how they saw them fit together in ways that were not new, but that

made them recognize the system of the language they were building. They freely discussed their errors, recognizing where those errors had come from and how listening to the group had helped them to correct quickly and thus to keep up with the group. Although they were asked at this point to comment only on the language-learning process itself, they interspersed those comments with comments about the feeling of community that they had built in the short lesson.

Learning as a community. Participants remarked on the group nature of the activity, noting that everyone in the group took part and that hearing the others gave a sense of support and security. It felt good, some said, to hear other people making mistakes too. Without the pressure of testing, it was easier to make mistakes, and they recognized that, through mistakes, one could learn. "Being in a group made us dare to explore it," said one. "If we didn't stay on board and make a commitment, we would get lost," added another. "But if you got lost, there were others doing it so you could catch up. The community pulled you back in."

The role of the teacher. Other participants commented on the fact that the leader directed them mostly with gestures and with very little talking. "You really motivated us," they said, "and you didn't even say anything." There was a strong feeling of affection and admiration for the leader among the participants: "You were good at directing us," said one, and another concurred, saying: "You slowed down, repeated as if to say 'try again' when you saw a lack of understanding." "You smiled when we got it," said another, "you were checking with your eyes." All agreed that the demonstration made it clear that the teacher is a very important part of the learning community, even when the task of learning is left completely up to the students!

The process and pace of learning. There were also comments on the pacing of the task: "The quicker it went, the more difficult it was, and I stuttered." "If the leader had slowed down, it would have been easier." Other participants disagreed, saying that the rapid pace was good because it allowed them to make mistakes and, in fact, even encouraged the making of errors and the rapid recognition and correction of those errors. Further, keeping the pace up meant one was constantly challenged and never bored with the activity. The rapid pace also allowed for a lot of repetition and thus automaticity of associations and responses. While the speed of the demonstration decreased proficiency in the short run, said the learners, it increased it in the long run.

The complexity of learning and the role of negotiation. Participants expressed surprise at the difficulty of the task. "It was amazing how hard it was to associate colours with concepts (signifier-signified), given that there were only four blocks. But we were able to apply other concepts in making these relationships between symbols and meanings" (e.g., red for "she" and blue for "he," corresponding to our cultural practice of linking red and pink with girls and blue with boys). The process was like language learning in this way too: learners are able to apply knowledge they have acquired previously.

Participants noticed, too, that they were learning grammar: singular, plural, and possessives. "It made me think of pronouns in different ways," said one.

Another added, "It was the same word for different colours, for example, green and blue meant 'we,' as did green and red." "Yes," Gomez de Garcia agreed, "in order to do this task, you're using all the skills of grammar."

To illustrate this and to point out the role of negotiation and consensus in language use, Gomez de Garcia discussed the complex process involved in reaching a decision about the responses for a green block, representing "I," in combination with a block of another colour. The appropriate response is "we," but participants invariably suggest "us" as well, noted Gomez de Garcia. In the case of a yellow block, representing "you," in combination with a blue or red block ("you" plus "he" or "she"), common responses include "you all," "you two," "you guys," and "yous." "How did you end up with 'you'?" she asked. "You settled on 'you' as a group without guidance from the leader. In this process, there are no winners or losers; it is not a zero-sum activity."

Emotional and psychological requirements for success. Gomez de Garcia then asked the group to think about how they felt emotionally while doing the exercise. Participants commented on feeling a lack of proficiency and noted the various strategies they devised to regain a sense of proficiency at the task, including self-correction and co-operation with the group. Several participants also mentioned feeling grateful. When asked who they felt grateful to, responses were that the gratitude was towards themselves for participating, for enjoying the activity, for being able to respond correctly, and for having the self-discipline to succeed. They felt grateful to the group for providing continuity and support, and they also felt grateful to the presenter for being understanding and non-judgmental.

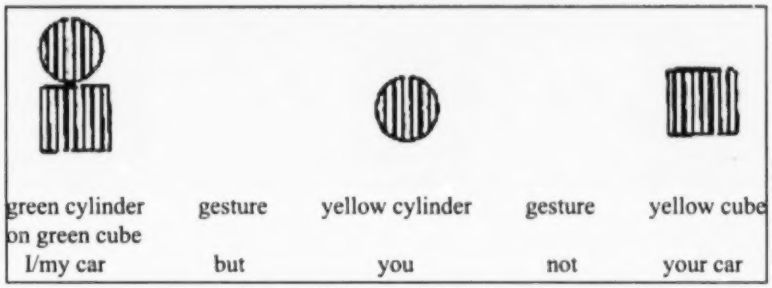
Overall, the group concluded that motivation for this task, as for any language-learning task, comes from group support and from the feeling that one can succeed.

The literate community: an allegory. This learning exercise was a very literate language activity, one in which a symbol is connected with a concept. Coloured blocks came to symbolize words in English that all of the students already knew. The presentation of any block elicited an oral response from the learners, a response that voiced the connection made between the symbol and the word it symbolized, much like what happens when we are reading aloud or to ourselves. The blocks arranged in certain configurations elicited sentences from the learners, just as words on a page in particular configurations bring sentences to the mind.

Figure 1 demonstrates one of these sentences in order to give a better idea of the symbolic nature of the process. It should be noted that the blocks are presented in a right-to-left order from the presenter's point of view so that they "read" left-to-right for the learners.

The presenter has verbally modelled the verb "driving" by placing the cylinder *on* the cube. The conjunction "but" and the adverb "not," represented by gestures, are also used one time each in the configuration. The learners have managed to generate a number of sentences from different configurations without the presenter modelling any other lexical items. This is much like what happens in reading. Just as we are able to produce spoken sentences without ever having

Figure 1. "I'm driving my car, but you're not driving your car."



heard them spoken to us, we learn to manipulate the symbols of writing so that we can read and understand written sentences that we have not heard read to us before. The members of the group present at this session could have "read" over 1,500 sentences generated just from the four coloured cylinders and cubes, the gestures for "and," "not," and "but," and the configurations that represented the nature of the predication.

The exercise demonstrates the emergent nature of literacy as the learners develop and then use their skills to connect symbols with concepts. Recognition of that connection, that symbolic value, is the beginning of the acquisition of literacy. The symbols for concepts learned in this exercise were simple—person, number, ownership, conjunction, and negation—but even the spaces or pauses between symbols and blocks meant something. In this way, this exercise is much like a reading exercise.

The members of this group also learned about the structure and importance of community and of each person's place in the work towards literacy. We ended our discussion with the following question: Why, if this exercise was fun and rewarding, are flags raised in Native American communities when we talk about literacy programs? Analysis of some of the participants' answers to questions about the learning process itself, and about the community of learners they had formed, are very revealing.

One problem, replied one participant, is that a literacy program, like this exercise, raises anxiety about one's proficiency. What they noticed about the small community we had formed in the approximately 25 minutes of the demonstration exercise was that no one was criticized for their lack of proficiency—not by the teacher and, most importantly, not by any of the other learners. What happens in many communities is that those who are already proficient in a target language belittle the efforts of those who are in the process of acquiring a language skill, be it speaking, reading, or writing. There are also identity issues involved when the target language is an ancestral language and when the learners are made to feel as though they are somehow less "traditional" or even less "ethnic" because they are not yet fluent speakers, readers, or writers of the language. Suggestions for dealing with such a problem have included "sensitivity training" for the scornful led by Elders who understand the efforts

being put forth by others to learn the language. Such training would emphasize the importance of helping learners to maintain a positive self-concept and making them feel supported in their efforts. It is also important to assure that those who *are* proficient in the language recognize how important they are to the success of the language program and what an important role they can play as teachers and leaders. This led us back to the second of the goals listed above for the block demonstration—to recognize the social forces at work on a class as primary to the learning process—and to the realization of how important the community had been in the success of individuals and of the "project" during the language-learning task in which the participants had just engaged.

Another problem, said a participant, is that this kind of task brings up painful memories of missionary classrooms and schoolroom punishments. We are now experiencing the effects of history, of the time when Tribal children were taken from their homes and placed in schools where they were punished for speaking the language of their parents. It is unfortunate how little we seem to have learned from this lesson considering that non-English speaking children today are being placed in classrooms where the emphasis is on learning to read and write a language they do not yet understand or speak, often before they have mastered literacy in the language they *do* understand. Although they are not being removed from their homes, we have to wonder at the kinds of resentments toward literacy we are forming in these children with our modern-day missionary classrooms (mission = English only) and schoolroom punishments. Turning those resentments from the past to positive use in today's tribal language literacy programs certainly provides a challenging task for all involved.

There were other interesting dynamics observed in the session that indicated how people were approaching and participating in the learning process. As people entered the room before the session started, they gravitated toward the back or sat along the perimeter of the rows of chairs that had been carefully arranged by the presenters. They looked suspiciously at the small, covered table that had been set up at the front and centre of the room, dangerously close it seems to the first row of chairs. At the urging of one of the presenters, some attendees (they did not yet know that they would soon become participants) moved closer to the front and centre. But others explained that they might have to leave or that they had other sessions they wanted to pop in on, so they wanted to be close to the door. This is what happens in many communities; there are those who are interested but who may not want to make a commitment until they know that the project will be interesting and worth their while. There are many other demands on their time, and a literacy project is yet another one of those demands. What are the benefits to be gained from participation? Those benefits should be revealed early and with great clarity and honesty.

The learners present in the session experienced the social benefits to be gained from participating in a driven group that is focused on a goal. They learned the benefit of feeling the support of others and the satisfaction of learning, and they felt gratitude towards themselves for having the determination to stick it out! Generally, however, people are looking for greater social benefits than these

such as better jobs or increased economic or educational opportunity. The ultimate goals of the participants, even if economic, need to be addressed in the early stages of project planning.

Involving women in this kind of planning is crucial. In many of the day-care, pre-school, and immersion programs we have visited or learned about, the majority of the teachers were women. Women's financial concerns can be markedly different from those of men, and the demands on their time can also differ. What level of commitment is to be expected of them? How many will step inside the door and listen for a while to see if the project will meet their needs, but then feel the pull of other commitments and leave because they do not see how the time and effort spent will benefit them? How many will remain on the periphery of the program, thinking that their participation is not required and that they are only "peripheral" to the literate community? Is "benefit to the language" a substantial enough goal to keep the attention of community members?

Following the demonstration, the participants were also asked who they thought the leaders in the language-learning community had been. Several voices proclaimed, without hesitation, "the front row." Some of those sitting in front looked surprised, as did some others not sitting in the front, some who had perhaps thought themselves to have taken a leadership role. Who *should* take the leadership role in language learning? Is that different from who *does* take that role? The "front row" is a clear metaphor for community leadership, whatever formal or informal nature that leadership has. When those in the front role are formally appointed to their leadership role, it comes as no surprise to them that others are following their lead. But when leadership roles develop informally, as they did during this session, "unlikely" leaders are bound to emerge, sometimes to their own surprise and often to the surprise of other community members, particularly the formally appointed leaders.

An interesting thing that happened during this session occurred when the blue cylinder "he" and the red cylinder "she" were presented together without any verbalization from the presenter. As the learners tried various forms such as "he and she" and even the relatively new "he/she," one participant, who was obviously a linguist, called out "third person singular masculine marker and third person singular feminine marker." The other participants laughed, and they treated this label as only a brief distraction from their task. They then refocused their attention on the two blocks until someone said "they," and everyone, looking relieved and happy again, took up "they" as the label for these two blocks presented together. A linguistic analysis was clearly *not* what was needed here, and, again, the community reached a consensus that even the linguists accepted.

It has happened in other groups with which this demonstration has been done that there is a more equal balance between men and women than there was at the Toronto session. In this session, there were only four or five men present and about fifteen women. The men did not take overt leadership roles, except for the failed attempt by the linguist, and, in fact, often followed the lead of the group, apparently not trying to be first or loudest in their responses. It has happened that in other sessions the leadership shifts from one person to another,

from man to woman, depending on whom the group feels is doing best at the time. Doing "best" can mean figuring out a confounding presentation of symbols, succeeding in responding smoothly and without errors, presenting an air of confidence in one's ability, taking risks even when others laugh, or being creative. As the task gets more difficult, the leadership changes, but never, in almost two dozen similar sessions, has the leadership stayed with one person throughout the lesson.

The same happens in successful literacy and stabilization projects. The leadership shifts, often without the conscious consent of the group, and new leaders emerge as the task changes because one person cannot be the master of all skills. These shifts in leadership can create problems when the organizational bureaucracy appoints a leader who does not recognize the leadership potential of each member in the project. This is especially problematic when the appointed leader is a man and the emergent leader is a woman. Cultural norms often do not allow or encourage such an arrangement. And, as we saw, the linguists should *not* be the leaders!

For most Tribes working toward stabilizing their languages, involvement of the community, consensus from the community on ways of proceeding, negotiation among community members when a problem arises, and support of the individual learner by the community of learners are crucially important. Establishment of such a community of learners requires answering some basic questions before the project can be undertaken, particularly when the project includes the use of reading and writing to aid in the learning of the language. If a community can come together to resolve these issues, that community will have taken great strides toward becoming a literate community before the first word is ever written or read.

The Jicarilla Apache Literacy Camps

To address the problems surrounding literacy in the Jicarilla Apache community, the Apache women are planning sessions in which they will standardize for themselves an Apache orthography under the guidance of three older Apache women. The sessions will offer an environment that will not only allow the women to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for competent literacy in Apache, but will also afford them the support of working together as a group of women. This is an important component of the Apache society, that is, women working together for the accomplishment of an important task, and the pre-school teachers and other women involved in the project are eager to participate in literacy lessons as a group.

The idea for these literacy camps was generated during the summer of 1999 at the Apache Language Immersion Camp for children, directed by Maureen Spahe Olson, proposed here as the director for the planned women's literacy "camps." During the children's camp, it became immediately apparent that the women were all working together comfortably and were accomplishing the goals of the camp, which were immersing the children in spoken language and providing them with appropriate cultural experiences. The Apache women participants

mentioned on several occasions that the absence of men made them more relaxed not only in their work of preparing and maintaining the campsite, but also in speaking, teaching, and attempting to write in Apache. They suggested the women's literacy camps themselves, and we have been preparing for them together.

The issues we will discuss at these camps will include the women's goals for their own literacy, the benefits they hope to acquire from literacy in the Tribal language, how they view their leadership and participant roles in the project, what level of commitment they feel comfortable in giving to the project, and, most importantly, how they feel they can contribute to the development of the literate community they are helping to crate. We will begin, we think, with a simple block exercise.

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